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ABSTRACT

In the context of the modern global society and economy, foreign language instruction is placing more emphasis on students' cross-cultural understanding and on using language to develop students' communication skills. These goals are evidenced by the current interest in Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum (FLAC) courses, which teach languages through content instruction in specific areas. FLAC courses are particularly relevant to two-year colleges since the teacher-student relationship is more personalized and there is generally a student-centered orientation. These courses can also help overcome the barriers to language instruction since they focus on content and make language classes relevant and functional. The success of the approach, however, depends upon institution-wide commitment and high-level administrative support. To make foreign languages a central component of the curriculum, Richland College (RC) in Dallas, Texas, founded the International Language Institute in 1990, offering language instruction in Spanish, French, German, Chinese, and Japanese. Encouraged by the highest levels of the administration, all RC language faculty underwent a year-long training program in proficiency-based teaching, and RC hosted a 2-week seminar in proficiency strategies for local high school language teachers. Other initiatives include the purchase of a state-of-the-art, computerized language lab and the implementation of a two-semester Business Spanish sequence based on a local needs assessment. Community college administrators are especially qualified to assume leadership positions with such innovative foreign language initiatives. (PAA)

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THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION
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Community college administrators have a key role to play in the current movement to revitalize foreign language instruction through innovative alliances, goals, and approaches. The realities of the global society and economy increasingly demand new initiatives to meet the needs for international expertise in all walks of life. Since language skills are at the heart of international training and careers, this close association should be highlighted by incorporating a strong cross-cultural emphasis in the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

Taking also into consideration the expectations of today's students to use language skills as communicative tools for understanding speakers of a target language, the profession has embraced the general goal of user-oriented and proficiency-based teaching. A logical corollary of the communicative and cultural goals is the current interest in the content or message of the foreign language class. Programs of study are being developed in several four-year colleges and universities that underscore foreign language learning through content instruction in a specific area, such as business or contemporary life and culture. This emphasis on language

acquisition via content materials is reflected in the Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum (FLAC) movement. FLAC efforts have recently been publicized and supported by several recent NEH projects.

The new framework of communicative methodology, cross-cultural emphasis, and content-centered instruction is especially compatible with the community college mission and structure. Two-year colleges are not restricted as four-year colleges and universities to the literary orientation of traditional foreign language faculty. Our institutions stress above all teaching and service to students. The relationship of instructor and student in community colleges is closer, more personalized, and similar to that between provider and client. Two-year college foreign language faculty are generally specialists in the target language and culture, rather than literary experts with strong research responsibilities or graduate student assistants who may or may not have adequate teaching experience and proficiency in the target language. In the field of foreign languages, there is ample evidence from research studies that show small class size is a very important factor in language learning. Generally, two-year colleges have a much lower faculty-student ratio than senior colleges and universities. The student-centered orientation prevalent in our community colleges is

another significant plus when applied to the foreign language area. Second language programs in community colleges are not limited to the needs of transfer students. They usually also focus on professional and occupational concerns.

Let us now look beyond the advantages inherent to the community college system and examine some of the difficulties we face in foreign language education. Our students are mostly adults with deeply entrenched linguistic and cultural frames of reference. It is very hard for many of these adult learners to absorb new cultural references. They frequently have limited abilities for second language acquisition. Learning a language and developing cultural awareness in a classroom setting, outside of the target culture, and with the limitations of time and space of a college class becomes a very difficult process for these students.

There are, however, ways to overcome the restrictions associated with the teaching of foreign languages in a community college. The vast majority of students prefer communicative language instruction and perform better in courses that present the content as relevant to their own needs and concerns. Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum (FLAC) courses, where the content becomes the primary

goal, also have a strong appeal to students because of their relevance and functional orientation.

Immersion methodology, as a term that implies using the target language for classroom communication from the beginning courses through the intermediate and advanced levels, can also prove a formidable weapon in overcoming many of the problems in the teaching and learning of a second language. In addition, the immersion concept when understood in its broader sense, as intensive, concentrated training (usually five or six hours of daily language activities, five days a week), following the model of the Defense Language Institute, can be used successfully in community college settings. Intensive immersion programs are usually designed for special student audiences, such as business executives and professionals. A very small number of community colleges has developed Associate Degree Programs in Foreign Languages. This number could increase considerably in the future if, as expected, the association among international studies, business, and foreign language continues to grow. Certificates could be issued in specific areas of language study, such as Business Language, Translation, and Interpretation. Associate degree programs in foreign languages have the potential to be successful if they are structured in collaboration with other

college departments and if they address the career needs of the new, non-traditional constituencies (full-time professionals and executives and occupational students).

Foreign languages can be made more accessible to the diverse community college audience by means of technology including multi-media, computer-assisted, and televised instruction.

Study-abroad programs also add to the internationalization of the college curricula, as well as attract students to campus-based foreign language study.

We cannot underestimate the importance of community outreach and public relations plans. Administrators should encourage language department coordinators and language faculty to actively participate in community outreach. It is appropriate to reiterate at this point that the expansion of community college foreign language programs is tied directly to the marketing of these courses as tools useful for a variety of professions, outside of the traditional transfer program.

We must clarify that the implementation of these new approaches and ideas for revitalized foreign language programs will not be

possible if the efforts are put forth by the foreign language department alone. The success of these reforms require institution-wide commitment and strong higher-level administrative support.

We would like to refer now to some of the adjustments in program structure and pedagogical direction that we have implemented at Richland College to make foreign languages a central component of the college curricula.

In 1990 we founded the International Language Institute (ILI) creating the college's foreign language department. The ILI offers college credit courses in Spanish, French, German, Chinese, and Japanese during the day and in the evening, to meet the needs of both transfer students and working professionals. Previous that time foreign language courses had been offered, under the administrative rubric of the Communication Division, which also included English, Journalism, Speech, and Photography courses. To complete the process of curricular internationalization, we also established the Multi-cultural Center and the Global Studies Program. These departments frequently work jointly with the International Language Institute in various curricular projects.

In order to train our language faculty in proficiency-based teaching, I personally led them in a one-year program of professional development under the auspices of the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). We all participated in the ACTFL Oral Proficiency training seminar in the Defense Language Institute at Monterey, California.

A full-time language faculty member, Dr. Nanette Pascal, was appointed Director of the ILI. Her position is one of instructional leader, and thus she combines administrative and teaching responsibilities.

The ILI Director and the language faculty developed clearly defined proficiency goals for the different levels of language instruction and produced functional-national syllabi in accordance with the communicative approach.

Articulation with local school districts was strengthened by means of a Title II, Higher Education grant program for a Richland-based two-week seminar in proficiency strategies for area high school Spanish and French teachers. These teachers had the opportunity to work in small groups at the Richland campus with several nationally-known proficiency authorities and with the college

language faculty. After this project, the patterns of networking and cooperation among language teachers from all curricular levels has continued to grow through the formation of the Academic Alliance for Foreign Languages of the North Central Texas Area, organization which Richland actively supports and sponsors.

As administrators, we encourage participation of our language faculty in professional seminars and colloquia at the state and national levels. Many of our language faculty frequently present sessions at the ACTFL, AATSP (American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese), and TFLA (Texas Foreign Language Association) annual meetings.

A state-of-the-art, computerized language lab was purchased in 1991 to support the communicative/cross-cultural focus of our language program. Both French and Spanish are taught via multimedia materials. The introductory French sequence uses French in Action, the Yale University audiovisual program of tapes and videos. Beginning Spanish classes work with the Destinos video series, produced jointly by McGraw-Hill and the WGBH Educational Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. At the intermediate and advanced level, Spanish students use the BBC video series Espana viva and Mexico vivo.

We also provide various opportunities for short and long term study abroad in Mexico, Spain, France, England, and Germany.

Three years ago, in order to assess community interest in business language programs, Professors Nanette Pascal and Maria Rojas, undertook a survey study of the instructional needs of the international business community in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Responding to a mailed questionnaire, members of the International Trade Association of Dallas/Fort Worth expressed overwhelming interest in a Spanish business language program. Following the guidelines of this study, Professors Pascal and Rojas designed our Business Spanish sequence, two-semesters of language study at the intermediate and advanced levels, created primarily for business executives and professionals. Classes in these courses (as in all of Richland's French and Spanish classes) are conducted entirely in the target language, according to the immersion method. The emphasis in this program is on business terminology, commercial correspondence, and cross-cultural training. Professors Pascal and Rojas have authored a business Spanish textbook especially for this project, Relaciones comerciales, which will be published by DC Heath in 1995. The Business Spanish program covers various areas of special interest: marketing, banking, management, accounting, import/export, human

resources, insurance, and legal terminology. Authentic materials, such as business documents, actual commercial correspondence, and articles from Latin American and Spanish business journals, are used to highlight cultural aspects and business vocabulary. The Business Spanish program, now in operation for two years, is offered in conjunction with the Madrid Chamber of Commerce Certification in Commercial Spanish. In the Fall of 1993, the college will add a Business French sequence to its business language curriculum. The french courses will be offered in association with the Paris Chamber of Commerce. The Spanish and French business language programs are available concurrently through Richland's non-credit Continuing Education division.

The ILI, by means of the concerted efforts of its director and faculty, maintains an ongoing public relations plan to heighten community awareness of the language program. As college president, I have strongly encouraged and supported these outreach efforts.

Community college administrators, because of their institutions' mission to provide instruction accessible to very diverse students for many different purposes, are especially qualified to assume leadership positions in the new foreign language framework. As administrators it is our responsibility to fully integrate foreign

languages into the educational mainstream of our institutions. We must develop, jointly with the language faculty, second language programs that emphasize collaborative efforts with other campus departments. It is imperative that we move beyond the traditional transfer curriculum, stressing instead career-related and community-based courses. As administrators in the most open and democratic form of higher education, we must face the challenge of making available to all interested students the communicative language skills and international awareness indispensable for success in the global village.

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